AN ADDRESS,

BY

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PITTSBURGH:

The Myers & Smith Company, Printers, 322 Weir Street.

1880.
The Excellence of the Psalms.

Opening Lecture of the Theological Seminary, Allegheny,
Pa., September 17, 1868.

BY PROF. D. B. WILSON.

Gentlemen of the Theological Class:

My subject this evening is The Excellence of the Psalms.

May we say of them as John Arnd, the first of the Pсалists, said: "What the heart is in man, that the Psalm is in the Bible." It is part of the word of God, part of that Scripture which is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. It is a wonderful mosaic, whose pieces are of unequal age, the whole of matchless beauty. Of it, Deissmier says: "This book has no equal in the expanse of time which it reflects, beginning with the wanderings in the wilderness, 1450 years before Christ, and reaching down to the building of the second temple, 500 years later." Bishop Wordworth says of the fourth book of the Psalm (Psalms 80-106): "This book has a very comprehensive character. It goes back to Moses, and it goes forward to the captivity and to the return from it. It reaches from Moses to Malachi." Porrows, another commentator on the Psalms, has written of them: "The history of the Psalms is the history of the church, and the history of every heart in which has burned the love of God. It is history not fully revealed in this world, but one which is written in heaven." To the same purpose Tholuck has written: "What a record that would be if one could write down all the spiritual experiences, the disclosures of the heart, the sorrows and conflicts, which man in the course of ages have connected with the words of the Psalms! What a history if we could discover the place this book has occupied in the inner life of the heroes of the kingdom of God!" Porrows, already quoted, gives

*The Book of Psalms, Vol. 1, Chap. 3.
†Porrows, already quoted, gives

†Commentary on the Book of Psalms, Introduction, Sec. 1.
us the reason of this boundless use: *"The nature of the volume accounts for this, for it is in itself to a very great extent, the com-
verse of the soul with God. With its words, rather than with their
own (they believe) have come before God. In these they have
uttered their desires, their fears, their confessions, their aspirations,
their sorrows, their joys, their thanksgivings. By these their devo-
tion has been kindled and their hearts comforted. The Psalter has
been, in the truest sense, the prayer book both of Jews and Christians."
Even of one of the Psalms, the 51st, Dyer has said after giving
many incidents: *"Indeed the history of this Psalm is the history of
the Christian soul, and in it the suffering and sinning of all ages
have found the expression of their own worthlessness and the comfort
that comes from a true confession."

I shall gather what I have to say of The Excellence of the Psalms
under two heads: 1. The Use of the Psalms in the Past—how
dear they have been to believers in all ages! 11. The Contents of
the Psalms—how full of the truth of God! I shall close by speak-
ing of the Benefit of the Use of the Psalms— to ourselves and others.
1st, then, the Use of the Psalms in the Past—how dear they have
been to believers in all ages! I repeat the words of Peter: *"The Psalter has
been, in the truest sense, the prayer book both of Jews and Christians."
We can do little more than confirm this by a few instances.
At the close of the tenth century before Christ, Jehoshaphat,
the son of Am, began to reign over Judah. He was the
godly son of a godly father. He did much to restore the true
religion in his kingdom. In the later part of his reign, Mosh and
Amnon came against him. Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast, and
offered in the house of the Lord the earnest prayer recorded in II.
Chronicles, the 20th chapter. He then equipped the army for battle,
and the 21st verse tells us: *"He appointed singers unto the Lord,
and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out
before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endures for-
ever." The strain of the 158th Psalm stirred their hearts, as they
went out to a battle that was a full victory. *"So the realm of
Jehoshaphat was quiet; for his God gave him rest round about," verse 30.
There came troubles again to Judah on account of sin.
They were sent into captivity, and it was apparently restored. In the
second month of the second year of the return began Zerubbabel and
Jeshua and the rest of the returned captives, and appointed the
Levites to set forward the work of the house of the Lord. When
the builders laid the foundation of the temple, they set the priests and
Levites to work to praise the Lord, *"and they sang together by
course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is
good, for his mercy endures forever toward Israel. And all the
people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, be-
came the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid," Ezra 3.
The familiar Psalm that had been used by the Levites at the dedica-
tion of the temple by Solomon stirred the hearts of this saved remnant.
II. Chron. 5: 13. Then Nehemiah came from Persia and cast
in his lot with the people of Jerusalem, and became the governor.
He wrought for reformation, for a revival of the true religion, for re-
purity. *"The wall was built, and the priests and the singers and
the Levites were appointed," (Nehemiah 7: 1), and the 12th chapter
makes note: *"In the days of David and Asaph of old there were
chief of the singers and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God.
And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Ne-
emiah gave the portion of the singers."

In the days of the Jewish revolt against the Syrian kings, the
army of Judah Maceneus sang the Psalm already noted, the 158th,
after they had disconsolated Geopiges and his host, I. Maceneus 4: 24.
So also in I. Maceneus 10: 38, we read, after Gouarr was taken:
*"When this was done, they praised the Lord with Psalms
and thanksgivings, who had done so great things for them, and given
them the victory."
All these instances are of public occasions, the record of memorable events. These Psalms ministered as well to the
family and personal religious life of Old Testament saints.

We make the transition to the New Testament by quoting Bishop
William Alexander, of Derry: *"Those strains of prayer or praise
spring freely from the stock of David's life, and are coloured
in some degree by the soil in which their roots are plunged. Yet
they are not exclusively the record of one life or of one spirit.
We know the names of the shapes that move across the
stage of the revered life—Saul, David, Achitophel, Shimron, Josiah,
and the rest. Yet they are not mentioned. Something sealed his
lips. Some restraining influence was at work as effectually as if a
voice had said, *"These Psalms are to be sung in centuries incon-
ceivably distant. They are to be used at funerals grander than
Abner's, in temples vaster than your imagination has dreamed of.
They are to set to music such as you have never heard, under skies
upon which you have never looked. They are to be the heritage of
man wherever there is sin or sorrow; wherever there is a sigh of
penitence, or a voice of yearning offered up to God. Keep them free,
therefore, from that which is merely base and personal."* The Psalms
are fitted for the inner life of saints, first in a Jewish, then in a
universal church. Believers under the Old Testament used them as
Jonah did, not merely repeating them, but naturally interweaving
phrases in the web of their own thought and language.
To the Virgin-Mother the Magnificat proves that the Psalter was
Bible, Prayee Book, Hymn Book all in one. And when we pass to
the Catholic Church, the different moods of David and the other
Psalmists answer to the heart of the mass."

First of all we think of our Lord, of him whose coming had
been foretold, of him of whom it is written: *"Though he were a Son,
yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; who in

* Psalm—Monica, page 227.
* The Hampton Lectures.
The Excellence of the Psalms.

the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong entreaties to him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared."—Psalm 31:2.

What a part the Psalms fill among the prophecies of Christ! Matthew 22:41-46 states: "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, what think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he? They say unto him, the Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in the Spirit call him Lord, saying, the Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his Son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any questions." These Psalms, which were convincingly invested of him, were in his heart. In their words, he voiced his praise of God. Wordsworth in his commentary on the 31st Psalm says what should make us pause and reflect: "The Psalter was the Hymn Book and Prayer Book of Christ." It satisfies him. Coleridge in his Thalia-Talk, refers to the use of the 23rd Psalm by our Saviour on the cross, and then adds: "Whether Christ did audibly repeat the whole or not, it is certain, I think, that he did it mentally, and said about what was sufficient to enable his followers to do the same, in the same manner; but the first line of a common hymn would be understood as a reference to the whole. Above all, I am thankful for the thought which suggested itself to my mind, while I was reading this beautiful Psalm, viz. that we should not exclusively think of Christ as the Logos united to human nature, but likewise as a perfect man united to the Logos. This distinction is most important in order to conceive, much more appropriately to feel, the conduct and exaction of Jesus."—

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Thalia-Talk".

To him Jesus said: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona! for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."—Matthew 16:17-19.

The Psalms of David have been ever been dear to those who suffer; they have instructed both Jews and Christians in the language of prayer and praise. And the Psalms abound in such sentences as these:—"The Lord looketh down from his sanctuary; out of heaven doth the Lord behold the earth: that he might hear the cryings of as such are in captivity, and deliver the children appointed unto death."—O let the erring eyes of the prisoner see before thee; according to the greatness of thy power, preserve those that are appointed to die."—The Lord helpeth them that righteous suffer; the Lord helpeth them that are in trouble; the Lord doth right for the righteous." Such sounds as these were new in a Roman dungeon. From the Apostle Paul's words, the Psalms have voiced the emotions of the martyrs and confessors of Jesus. Think of what Athanasius endured for the truth's sake, what service he rendered to the church of Christ. This witness for the truth, referring to the 119th Psalm, recommended it to Marcellus as most appropriate for the Christian who, for the name of his Master, is enduring the attacks of enemies or suffering from the calumnies of friends.

I pass on to Reformation times. Of the Huguenots it is noted, when they assembled on Saturday night for family prayer, the head of the lecturing household used to read the 23rd Psalm in cheerful tones; and, as the disciples were listening, each one considered his own share, and the words of Luther to his friend Malanchose, in seasons of discouragement, are known to us all: "Come, Philip, let us sing the 46th Psalm." And of the 110th Psalm he said, that it is worthy to be set in a frame of gold and diamonds, so full is it of Christian thought and divine instruction, and of all the Psalms the very crown and chief. The fifth verse is like a red, cupped mine, from which flow Christian instruction and wisdom, faith, hope and confidence, the like to which no other scripture supplies. John Knox, of Leeborough, tells us of John Knox: "It was his ordinary practice to read every day the Psalms of David, the whole of which he possessed regularly once a month." The same writer says in his account of the scholar George Buchanan, engaged in a monastery by papal inquisition: "In this confinement he conserved himself with that unrivalled paraphrase of the Psalms of David, which placed him first among modern Latin poets, and will continue to be read with delight as long as the language in which they are written is understood." When the news of the scattering of the Spanish Armada, in 1588, reached Edinburgh, Robert Browne took the 76th Psalm as his text, preaching in a running commentary on its words, as most fitting the event. Dr. Bonnie, in his work, The Psalms: Their History, Teach-
The Excellence of the Psalms.

The waywardness of the wicked, the judgments of God, the incalculable, the saving work of Christ, his three-fold office as the Redeemer of men, his suffering even to death, his resurrection, his glorious ascension.

I would speak more fully of Christ in the Psalms. I have already referred to the question of Jesus as to David's Son and Lord. The same 110th Psalm, whose first verse our Saviour thus employed, furnished to the writer of the Hebrews a text which occupies a most important section of that epistle: "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." In the verse before, he had quoted the second Psalm, as previously in chapter 1st: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." The same first chapter has references also to the 89th, the 103d, the 104th and the 110th Psalms. On the day our Saviour rose from the dead, two discouraged disciples were making their way to Emmaus. Jesus joined himself to them, and first of all instructed them. Asking them, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" he began at Moses and all the Prophets, and explained to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. When he had disclosed to the sight, and had vanished from their sight, they returned to Jerusalem and joined the company of the disciples. As St. Luke himself appeared, and evidenced to them the reality of his resurrection, and then he said: "These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, and ye are witnesses of these things." So the Apostle Peter in his Pentecostal sermon, after he had quoted the prophecy of Jesus, speaking of the day of the Lord, said: "Bishop of Milan, had said: "Although all divine Scripture breathes the grace of God, yet sweet beyond all others is the Book of Psalms. .. History succeeds, the law teaches, prophecy announces, rebuke chastens, morality persuades; in the Book of Psalms we have the fruit of all these, and a kind of medicine for the salvation of man. . . . What is more delightful than a Psalm? It is the benediction of the people, the praise of God, the thanksgiving of the multitude, the voice of the church, the harmonies of our faith.

Herein liest we set forth in strains of poetry the greatness of God, his glorious attributes, the folly of idolatry, the creative work of God, man's sin and fall, God's providential care, the Spirit's guidance, the waywardness of the wicked, the judgments of God, the incalculable, the saving work of Christ, his three-fold office as the Redeemer of men, his suffering even to death, his resurrection, his glorious ascension.

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The Excellence of the Psalms.

right hand of the Father Almighty, the progress and history, the distresses and persecutions, the triumph and glory of the church, the glorious retributive providence of Jesus Christ, his supremacy and Lordship over this lower creation, and the bright scenes of joy and blissfulness at his coming in his kingdom which enlivens the Book of Psalms are themes that can never prove stale and uninteresting to the Christian heart. The longer the sentiments of this Book have been studied and used for purposes of praise and supplication in the worship of God, the dearer does it become to the pine heart, and the contrast between it and other hymns becomes glaring to point of strength and richness, of grandeur and power to enlighten, confirm and invigorate the Christian faith and hope, and lift the heart up to the holy joy and consummation, distinguished and triumphant communities with God.

There is a depth, a power, an Motion, a reach, a grandeur, a comprehensive and sublimity in the Psalms of the Bible which we look for in vain in Walt's imitation or any other imitation. This inimitable collection, made by the Spirit of God, possesses a worth and power far beyond anything to be found in Walt's imitation, or any other collection of sacred songs, the production of uninspired men. . . . Dr. Watts was himself greatly in error as to the views he took of the spirit and design of the Book of Psalms which led him to style many of them 'learning Psalms,' and represent them to be unsuitable to the Christian spirit. The future tense indicates often mere prophetic character, and the imperative mood, judged by him as inappropriate to the Christian, when employed by the Saviour whom the literal David personated, possesses a deep significance and gives a point and power to the denunciation contained in many of the Psalms by no means inconsistent with, but corroborative of the faith and hopes and spirit of the evangelical worshipper. An intelligent use of the Book of Psalms for purposes of religious worship could not fail to guard congregations against the influx and influence of dangerous and pernicious Saviour who apprised his disciples that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Book of Psalms concerning him. Luke 22:44. The Divine version throughout, in its reference to the contents of the Psalms, bears witness to their relation to Christ. For example, To the 25 Psalm: "Concerning the call of the Gentiles, and prophetical allusions to the passion of the Messiah." To the 72nd Psalm, "A Psalm of David, when he made Solomon King; a prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah, and the calling of the Gentiles." Thus much for Christ in the Psalms. The fruits of his redemption are fully set forth. We need only recall the use the apostle Paul makes of the 31st Psalm in his argument as to justification by grace; and the adoption and sanctification of believers come before us in the 89th and the 118th Psalms; while the writer of the Hebrews uses the 5th to impress the truth, that there remains a rest to the people of God, and the 16th Psalm furnishes, as we have seen, the prophecy of the resurrection of the body of our Lord, who

The Excellence of the Psalms.

Himself said: "Because I live, ye shall live also." The 19th and 119th Psalms dwell upon the Law of God; while Bishop Alexander tells us: "The great sacramental ideas of the Gospel are also provided for in the Psalter. It has strata which imply and go forth to meet the conceptions of entrance into the new community by a new birth, and of the continued sustenance of the spiritual life by a eucharistic feast." He brings as we would, the words of Christ to the Hebrews: "Except a man be born again," in relation with Psalms 86th. "This man was born there:" and how frequent are the festal Psalms.

The exercise of the soul in repentance, faith and prayer, as voiced in the Psalms, have already been sufficiently noted. I close this part of this address with quoting some testimonials to the worth of certain Psalms, and a testimony to the whole from the German commentator, Delitzsch. The Syrian version has this for the 1st Psalm: "A summary of the instructions concerning the various Christian graces, which is contained in the amon of the nine lamentations of Matthew." Adolph Monod has written of the 39th Psalm: "It is in the service, it is from the bosom of the service, that he (David) writes these lines, which are intended to be the encouragement of the church in all ages. O power of the lives of Christ! O resuscitation of soul! O grace of the true servant of God! O virtue of the Apostles, and virtue of the Prophets, virtue of Christ in them, and of the Holy Ghost! For never man (of himself) would be capable of such a power of will, of such a triumph over the flesh." Dr. George Douglas, of Scotland, says: "To this hour the Christian Church has no missal hymns equal for liturgy to Psalms 67 and 72." Hymnus says of the 68th Psalm: "It is no longer a tune telling how God, in days of old, led the Jewish Church, as in a triumphal march, from Sinai to Zion, but how Christ, having founded his Kingdom upon earth, is preparing it now, by victory over the opposing power of sin and death, for the great consecration, when having put all enemies under his feet, he shall gather into one all the kingdoms of the earth, and as a mighty victor and triumphant leader, he shall be proclaimed by every tongue to be 'King of kings,' and 'Lord of Lords.'" Alexander Von Homboldt spoke thus of the 150th Psalm: "It might almost be said that one single Psalm represents the image of the whole Canon. We are astonished to find in a lyrical poem of such limited compass the whole universe—the heavens and the earth—stretched with a few bold touches. The contrast of the labor of man with the animal life of matter, and the range of consciousness, invisible power, renewing the earth at will, or sweeping it of inhabitants, is a grand and solemn creation." Of the 117th Psalm it is said: "This Psalm drew it to the admiration of the French, who, as his sister, Madame Perier, says, often spoke with such feeling about it that he seemed transported. He used to say that, 'With the deep study of life it contains the sum of all the Christian virtues.'" * Hampton Lectures, page 240. † Les Monson, page 79. "The Psalms." ‡ Athenæ a sec. unit. § Quoted by Perowne.

The Excellence of the Psalms.

He single out verses 29 as giving the turning point of man's character and destiny: "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Of the 113th Psalm (of which Charles Hodge says, comparing all the Psalms to genes, we should like this to be a pearl) Augustine wrote: "This should be received, not as the voice of one man singing, but as the voice of all who are the body of Christ. This temple of God, the body of Christ, the congregation of the faithful, has one voice. It is as it were one man who chanted the Psalms." I now give the words of Delitzsch as a summary: "It (the Book of Psalms) is without equal in the richness of the form and feeling of its poetry, for freshness of spirit and expressing of the deepest emotion, from still, soft prayer to the triumphant hymn of victory. To this we may add that it is without equal for the richness of its contents. It embraces nature and history, heaven and earth, the world around and the world within, the experience of God and all from the darkest abyss of trial to the summit of celestial joy. It is unequalled in the depth of its secret soul experience, and the power of expressing it—not the palpable and superficial, but the soul secrets of the human life, ideal and real, abstract and concrete, individual and in- dividual—and as it possesses the power of the Apostles, and for the inquiry of the commentator, a growing attention towards something ever fresh and new." This depth and fulness are from the Spirit of God.

I come now to speak.

II. Of the Benefit of the Use of the Psalms. This portion of the word of God, used by saints before and since the coming of Christ, so rich in the instruction of doctrine and experience, must needs be most fruitful. Isaac Walton, in his "Sons in Zion," states that the frequent repetition of the Psalms of David hath been noted to be a great part of the devotion of the primitive Christians; the Psalms having in them not only prayers and holy instructions, but many communications of God's secrets as may preserve, comfort and confirm our dependence on the power and providence of our Creator. Cimabue, one of the world's greatest scholars, says in his journal, in connection with an accident on the Seine with peril to himself and wife: "I could not but remember that place of Ambrose where he says: 'This is the peculiarly of the Psalter, that everyone can use the words, as if they were peculiarly and individually his own.'" Bishop Alexander says: "The soul, consecrated of sin; learning for passion, the soul, lifted from the dust and 'liquidifying unto God,' finds its history in the Psalter. The end of all the Psalms is 'of anima communicans Dominus.'" The Psalms is run with a rapid hand over the whole scale of the affections of the human spirit seeking after God. We may pass the hardest judgment upon David; yet the intensest, purest, saintliest, most virginal souls—Augustine, St. Louis, Ken, Keeble, Leighton—have found nothing more suitable in life or death than — Dr. Alexander's Hampton Lectures. Quoted by Alexander.
The Excellence of the Psalms.

are the record of individual experience. Personal religion is the
name in all ages. The depth of humanity remain untroubled by the
storms of ages which change the surface. This Psalm (he is speaking
of the 61st), written three thousand years ago, might have been writ-
ten yesterday; it describes the vicissitudes of spiritual life in an Eng-
lishman as truly as in a Jew. Not of an age, but for all time.
If one uniting distant times, they make Christians of one age, met
in one place, with one accord. The same writer elsewhere gives ex-
pression to thoughts which though new, to any, as of record, may yet
be understood by all familiar with the Psalms, whether in reading or
use in praise: "The value of the public reading of the Psalms is,
that they express for us, indirectly, those deeper feelings which there
would be a sense of indelicacy in expressing directly.
There are feelings of which we do not speak to each other; they are too
sacred and too delicate. Such are most of our feelings to God.
If we do speak of them, they lose their fragrance, become coarse; say,
there is a sense of indelicacy and exposure. Now, the Psalms afford
precisely the right relief for this feeling; wrapped up in the forms of
poetry (metaphor, etc.), that which might seem exaggerated is excused
by those who do not feel it, while they who do, can read them, ap-
plying them as occasions of uttering their own feelings. This is the
irreplaceable power:"  

"The pages of that book have often been blotted with the tears of those whom others esteemed hard and cold, and whom they treated with suspicion and contempt. Those words have gone up to God, mingled with the sighs scarcely uttered in the brokenhearted anguish of those whom Praiseless called sinners, of those whose hearts were denominated as loaves or infidels, and who loved God and truth above everything else. Surely it is
holy ground. We cannot praise God without realizing in a very
special manner the communion of saints, the union of the church,
militant, and the church triumphant. We cannot pray the Psalms
without having our hearts opened to affections enlarged, our
thoughts drawn heavenward. He who can pray them best is nearest
to God, knows most of the Spirit of Christ, is ripest for heaven."  

"This is the one who marks these words, with intelligence, and from every quar-
ter, and with every access?"

John Donne said of the Psalms: "The Psalms are the manna of
the church; as manna tasted to every man like that he liked best, so
do the Psalms minister instruction and satisfaction to every man, in
every emergency and occasion. David was not only the greatest poet
of Christ himself, but of every particular Christian: he foretold
what I, what any shall do, and suffer and say."  

"What food have they to the most labored and laborious of the ministry of Christ? I need
not go for back. Look in these times at the work of Charles H.
Spurgeon for nearly forty years in the great city of London. How
clear the Psalms were to him. "The Treasury of David" came from
his pen because the Psalms were precious to his soul. They were to
him heavenly manna, and strengthened by this food, he labored zeal-
ously for God. The great heroes, whose names I gave in the first part
of this address, were sustained by these Psalms as they read them
and sang them in praise of God.

The use of the Psalms promotes progress. The leaders in true
progress have used this heavenly manna. See what Calvin did for
the church, for civil and religious liberty. He says of the Psalms:
"If the reading of my commentary on this book brings as much
blessing to the church of God as I have got in the composition of it,
I shall not repent of the work. Not without reason have I been ac-
customed to call this book the anatomy of all the parts of the mind,
since there is no emotion of which anyone can be conscious, that is
not imaged here as in a glass. All the sorrows, troubles, fears,
doubts, hopes, pains, perplexions, stormy outbreaks, by which the
hearts of men are tossed, have here been depicted by the Holy Spirit
to the very life." Tholuck says of John Jacob Moller that he was
equally renowned as a statesman and as a Christian. He had
been engaged in severe struggles for the right of his country,
and had been on that account unfavourably impressed by his sovereign
for a period of two years. Here is what this Christian patriot says of
the Psalms: "Oh, how precious and dear was the possession of
the Psalms: how much comfort, light, and strength have they im-
parted to my fainting soul! I often not only missed the way, but
lost the very trace of it. I sat down as if I had become paral-
ized. One word from the Psalms returned me to life: Like a man
settled on the pinions of that eagle; carried by me, I scaled the
rock, and beheld from that elevation the world, with its cares and
sorrows, stretched out beneath me. As I gazed I could think, inter-
mourning, pray, wait, hope, and speak in the spirit of David; I thank
thee, O Lord, that thou hast humbled me. I acquired to know and
understand the rights of God."

"I was enabled with tears to express my gratitude for mercies which formerly I counted not as
blessings, but as my right and due." So he was nourished. Think
of what William Wilmot did for the cause of Christ, and the
liberties of men. He wrote in his journal in 1803: "I am reading
the Psalms just now. What wonderful compositions, what proof of
the divine origin of the religion to which they belong! There is in
the world nothing else like them."

What have the Psalms done, what must they do for national reli-
gion? What an exhibit do they give of the majesty and power, the
rule and government of God; what exalted praise of his love; what
a setting forth of the dignity and authority of Christ, of the grace
and beneficence of his mercy! "Ask of me and I shall give thee the
heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for
The Excellence of the Psalms.

Lastly, then, the Psalms prepare for life’s close. In the words of Alexander, who has been often quoted: “In it (the Psalter) you will find him whom it is best to know—Jesus, your Lord and your God. And as time goes on—when you bow down in petition; when you seek for pardon: when your head is bent in sorrow; when you lie on a bed of sickness; when your lips turn white and quiver as you kneel before your dead; as the solemn hour comes, when your spirit must pass into God’s presence, it has treasures which will never fail you.” May I not instance here our Savior himself? Bishop Wordsworth, in his Commentary, dwelling on the 23rd Psalm, the 5th verse, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit," says: “This Psalm is connected with the 22d Psalm. Both of these Psalms were used by Christ on the cross. From the 22d Psalm he derived those bitter words of anguish, ‘Eloi, Eloi, huma sabachthani?’ From the present Psalm he derived those last words of love and trust which he uttered just before his death.” Time would fail me to tell of the names of those who have used these words since Christ and the early martyrs. History notes them as the last words of Polyepap, Paul, the Great, Bernard, Jerome of Prague, Lady Jane Grey, Melancthon, George Herbert. John Huss often repeated them when at the stake. Ridley used them in the flames. Luther came near them frequently at Eisleben when in distress of body in approaching death. But I must close. The literature here is so great.

The Book of Psalms is the Church’s Manual of Praise. The lowly Christian and the distinguished scholar alike may be satisfied. “We can appreciate the estimate of the Psalter accorded to an old Scotch woman. The Songs of Zion’ had been her stay in times of trial, a means of spiritual refreshing, and an aid to her devotion for nearly a hundred years. A friend asked her whether she thought it wrong to sing hymns, and whether she would not like to unite in singing one. ‘Aye,’ was her reply, ‘I’m gane to begin the hymns when I have finished the Psalms.’” Moser, whose words are quoted by Tholuck as already given, has further said: “If my soul would keep holy days, the Psalms become my temple and my altar. Next to the writings of the New Testament, they are now to me my dearest and most precious book—the golden mirror, the cyclopedia of the most blessed and fruitful knowledge; thoroughly to understand them will be the companion of eternity, and our second life will form their commentary.”

“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”—Psalms 17:15.

“It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”—1 John 3:2.

* R. M. Sonneman’s Tract on Psalmody.